

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters, Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Project, Washington, DC 20503.

1. Sources,  
part of this  
report

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED FINAL 01 May 96 To 31 Oct 96	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  TENTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MOLTEN SALTS				5. FUNDING NUMBERS  F49620-96-1-0157 2303/BS 61102F	
6. AUTHOR(S)  Dr Richard T. Carlin					
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  The Electrochemical Society, Inc. 10 South Main Street Pennington NJ 08534-1902				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  AFOSR/NL 110 Duncan Ave Room B115 Bolling AFB DC 20332-8080  Capt Hugh C. De Long				10. SPONSORING MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT  Approved for public release: distribution unlimited.				12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)  The symposium was attended by internationally recognized speakers from sixteen countries. Sixty-six papers were presented at the symposium of which fifty-four are contained in this proceedings volume. Much of the symposium centered around technological opportunities in molten salts and related materials. In keeping with this theme, Prof. Niels J. Bjerrum in his 1996 Max Bredig Award address emphasized that molten salt electrochemistry has a rich past with a bright future in numerous technologically important areas, including alloy electrodeposition, production of amorphous metals, electrosynthesis of superhard materials, electrocatalysis, and corrosion. Of course, the basis for these technological advances is derived from the fundamental understanding of molten salts provided by numerous researchers, and excellent papers were presented that provided further insight into the complexity of molten salt thermodynamics, transport properties, structure, and spectroscopy.					
14. SUBJECT TERMS				15. NUMBER OF PAGES	
				16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT (U)		18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (U)		19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	
				20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	

Contractor's Final Report  
on  
**Tenth International Symposium on Molten Salts**

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10 State Street  
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Contract No. F49620-96-1-0157

This Contract in the amount of \$2,000 was sponsored by:

USAF, AFMC  
Air Force Office of Scientific Research  
110 Duncan Avenue Suite B115  
Bolling AFB DC 20332-8080

The technical monitor of this program is:  
Maj. Hugh C. De Long, Ph.D.

Period Covered 1 Apr 96 to 1 Aug 96

Date Submitted: 14 Nov 96

19970602 138

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	3
Table of Contents from Proceedings Volume .....	4
Max Bredig Award Address.....	9
Budget Summary.....	11

## **Abstract**

The Tenth International Symposium on Molten Salts was held during the 189th Meeting of the Electrochemical Society in Los Angeles, California, May 6-10, 1996. The symposium was attended by internationally recognized speakers from sixteen countries. Sixty-six papers were presented at the symposium of which fifty-four are contained in the proceedings volume. Three copies of the proceedings volume entitled *Molten Salts X* have been sent to AFOSR to satisfy the contract requirements. The Table of Contents of the proceedings is provided on page 4 of this report.

Much of the symposium centered around technological opportunities in molten salts and related materials. In keeping with this theme, Prof. Niels J. Bjerrum in his 1996 Max Bredig Award address emphasized that molten salt electrochemistry has a rich past with a bright future in numerous technologically important areas, including alloy electrodeposition, production of amorphous metals, electrosynthesis of superhard materials, electrocatalysis, and corrosion. Of course, the basis for these technological advances is derived from the fundamental understanding of molten salts provided by numerous researchers, and excellent papers were presented that provided further insight into the complexity of molten salt thermodynamics, transport properties, structure, and spectroscopy. A summary of the Max Bredig Award address is provided on page 9 of this report.

Financial support for this symposium came from several generous sources, including the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the Physical Electrochemistry and High Temperature Materials Divisions of the Society, the Molten Salt Committee of the Electrochemical Society of Japan, and The Petroleum Research Fund, administered by the American Chemical Society. Funds from AFOSR (\$2,000) were used to supplement travel expenses for US and international distinguished speakers.

## **Table of Contents from Proceedings Volume**

### **Max Bredig Award**

Molten Salt Electrochemistry: Present and Future Priorities N. J. Bjerrum.....	1
---	---

### **Opening Session: A Dedication to Gleb Mamantov**

Minimizing Fouling and Corrosion by Ionic Liquids Formed in the Combustion of Biomass M. Blander .....	3
Vibrational Modes and Structure of Rare Earth Fluorides and Bromides in Binary Melts: $\text{LnX}_3\text{-KX}$ ( $\text{X}=\text{F}, \text{Br}$ ; $\text{Ln}=\text{Y}, \text{La}, \text{Ce}, \text{Nd}, \text{Sm}, \text{Gd}, \text{Dy}, \text{Yb}$ ) B. Borresen, V. Dracopoulos, G. Photiadis, B. Gilbert, and G. N. Papatheodorou.....	11
Effects of Hydrophobic Interaction in <i>n</i> -Alkanecarboxylate Hydrate Melt S. Deki, H. Nakahara, J. Kondo, and A. Kanjinami .....	28
Electrodeposition of Cobalt-Aluminum Alloys from the Aluminum Chloride-1-Methyl-3-Ethylimidazolium Chloride Room-Temperature Molten Salt C. L. Hussey, J. A. Mitchell, W. R. Pitner, and G. R. Stafford .....	36
Near Infrared Spectroscopy of Anionic Conducting Polymer Membranes D. S. Newman, G. Bi, D. L. Snavely, J. Dubsky, F. Zamborini, and T. S. Cina .....	53
Electrochemical Reactions of Nitrogen in Molten Chloride System Y. Ito, M. Tada, and T. Goto .....	62

### **Catalysis and Acid-Base Chemistry**

Nonaqueous Room-Temperature Ionic Liquids: A New Class of Solvents for Catalytic Organic Reactions H. Olivier and Y. Chauvin .....	70
Physico-Chemical and Structural Properties of $\text{DeNO}_x$ and $\text{SO}_2$ Oxidation Catalysts S. G. Masters, C. Oehlers, K. Nielsen, K. M. Eriksen, R. Fehrmann, A. Chrissanthopoulos, and S. Boghosian.....	74

Acidity of HCl in Neutral Buffered Chloroaluminate Molten Salts D. King and R. A. Osteryoung.....	80
Molten Salt and Related Acids K. E. Johnson, W. D. Chandler, and B. D. Fahlman .....	92
Gutmann Acceptor Properties of LiCl, NaCl, and KCl Buffered Ambient-Temperature Chloroaluminate Liquids R. A. Mantz, P. C. Trulove, R. T. Carlin, and R. A. Osteryoung .....	104
Electrochemical Studies of Acyl Halide Reduction in a Room-Temperature Molten Salt G. T. Cheek .....	116
A Study of Binary Molten Pyridinium Salts A. M. Elias, M. E. Elias, and A. J. S. Carmo.....	125
Measuring the Rates of Solid State Reactions Between AlCl <sub>3</sub> and C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>6</sub> NCI Using Differential Scanning Calorimetry D. S. Newman, J. Rosinski, and K. S. Leis.....	135
Effect of Alkali Metal Fluoride on Anodic Reaction in a Molten NH <sub>4</sub> F-HF System A. Tasaka, T. Kawagoe, and T. Osada.....	144
Spectroscopic Investigation of Effect of Lewis Basicity on the Valent-State of an Uranium (V) Chloride Complex in Ambient Temperature Melts S. Dai, L. M. Toth, G. D. Del Cul, G. R. Hayes, and J. R. Peterson .....	152

### Metals and Alloys

Electrodeposition of Magnesium from Halide Melts B. Børresen, G. M. Haarberg, R. Tunold, A. Kiswa, and J. Kazmierczak.....	157
Effect of Additives on Ti Electrorefining in Molten Chloride T. Takenaka, A. Sugimoto, Y. Mitani, and M. Kawakami .....	171
Cathodic Behavior of the Deposition of Nb and Al in NaCl-AlCl <sub>3</sub> Melt Y. Sato, K. Iwabuchi, N. Kawaguchi, H. Zhu, M. Endo, T. Yamamura, and S. Saito .....	179
Electrochemical Properties of Nb <sub>3</sub> Cl <sub>8</sub> in the MgCl <sub>2</sub> -NaCl Eutectic at 471°C M. Mohamedi, N. Kawaguchi, Y. Sato, and T. Yamamura.....	189
Demonstration Experiment of Uranium Metal Production System	

T. Suzuki, T. Sakata, H. Tsuchiya, K. Ota, Y. Takasawa, N. Teramae, S. Yamagami, and K. Endo.....	204
A Study of Production Process of Uranium Metal by Molten Salt Electrolysis Using Zinc Cathode - A Study of Uranium Chloride Production Step H. Tsuchiya, T. Sakata, T. Suzuki, J. Takahashi, T. Fukamachi, Y. Kijima, and K. Toyabe.....	213
Corrosion Behavior of Materials Used in Uranium Metal Production Y. Hoshino, K. Ota, S. Yamagami, K. Endo, H. Tsuchiya, T. Sakata, and T. Suzuki .....	222
Development of Transuranium Elements Recovery from High-Level Radioactive Liquid Waste Y. Akai and R. Fujita .....	230
Characteristics of Cathodic Reactions in $\text{BaCl}_2$ -NaCl Melts Containing $\text{AlF}_3$ Components M. Ueda, S. Konda, T. Sasaki, and T. Ishikawa .....	236
Electrochemical Behavior of Glassy Carbon and Some Metals in a $\text{ZnCl}_2$ -NaCl Melt Y. Okano and A. Katagiri .....	244
A New Experimental Approach to Measure Electrical Conductivity of Molten Fluoride Electrolytes X. Wang and R. D. Peterson .....	254
Titration of Refractory Metal Compounds in Molten Salts by Square Wave Voltammetry P. Chamelot, B. Lafage, and P. Taxil.....	269
EQCM Studies of Aluminum and Aluminum Alloys in Room Temperature Molten Salts H. C. De Long and P. C. Trulove.....	276
EQCM Measurements of Cobalt-Aluminum Alloys H. C. De Long and R. T. Carlin .....	284
Electrodeposition and Nucleation of Lead from Chloride Melts T. Støre, G. M. Haarberg, T. E. Jentoftsen, and R. Tunold .....	290
High Temperature Electrochemical Synthesis of Zirconium Diboride from Chloro-Fluoride Melts V. P. Lugovoi, S. V. Deviatkin, G. Kaptay, and S. A. Kuznetsov.....	303
High Temperature Interaction of Boron Oxide with Aluminum Fluoride S. V. Deviatkin, K. I. Arsenin, and G. Kaptay.....	312

Formation of $\text{LaNi}_5$ Film on Nickel Substrate by Electrolysis in Molten Chloride and Its Hydrogen Absorption Property M. Okido, R. Ichino, and R. Tamura .....	320
---	-----

Elimination of Primary Silicon Phase in Hyper-Eutectic Al-Si Alloy by Molten Salt Process T. Inoue, H. Kanematsu, Y. Kunieda, S. Hayashi, and T. Oki .....	334
---	-----

### Batteries

Modification of $\text{LiCl-LiBr-KBr}$ Electrolyte for $\text{LiAl/FeS}_2$ Batteries T. D. Kaun, A. N. Jansen, G. L. Henriksen, and D. R. Vissers .....	342
--	-----

Polarization Phenomena at $\beta''$ -Alumina/Molten Salt Interface M. Matsunaga, K. Minamoto, and M. Morimitsu.....	355
--	-----

Rechargeable Alkali Metal and Li-Al Alloy Anodes in Ionic Liquid Electrolytes R. T. Carlin and J. Fuller.....	362
--	-----

Morphology of Lithium and Sodium Electrodeposits in Room-Temperature Molten Salts J. Fuller and R. T. Carlin.....	372
--	-----

Electrochemistry of Vanadium Oxides in Room Temperature Molten Salt Electrolytes D. M. Ryan and T. L. Riechel.....	381
---	-----

### Fuel Cells

The Role of Melt Chemistry in Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell (MCFC) Technology J. R. Selman and M. S. Yazici .....	388
---	-----

Mass Transfer and Steady State Concentration Distributions of Binary Electrolytes and Additives in MCFCs Th. Brenscheidt, O. Böhme, and H. Wendt .....	396
---	-----

High Temperature Corrosion of Tantalum with the Presence of Molten Carbonate K. Ota, K. Toda, T. Kojima, N. Motohira, and No. Kamiya .....	406
---	-----

High Temperature Corrosion of Separator Material in $\text{Li}_2\text{CO}_3$ - $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ and Electrolyte Consumption for MCFC M. Yanagida, K. Tanimoto, T. Kojima, Y. Tamiya, T. Asai, and Y. Miyazaki.....	417
--	-----



Electrochemical Response of Stainless Steel 310, 316L and Nickel-Rich Alloy in Molten Carbonate	
M. S. Yazici and J. R. Selman .....	422

### **Thermodynamics, Transport Properties, Structure, and Spectroscopy**

Thermochemistry, Physico-Chemical Properties and Modeling of the Liquid MX-LnX <sub>3</sub> Mixtures (M = alkali, Ln = rare-earth, X = halide)	
---	--

M. Gaune-Escard .....	439
-----------------------	-----

Electron Mobilities in Solutions of Alkali Metals in Molten Alkali Halides	
--	--

G. M. Haarberg and J. J. Egan .....	468
-------------------------------------	-----

Application of Thermodynamic Databases to Calculation for Surface Tension of Molten Salt Mixtures	
--	--

T. Tanaka and S. Hara .....	484
-----------------------------	-----

Copper Deposition from Cu(I) Ions in CuCl-BPC Molten Salts - Microstructural Analysis of the Melts	
---	--

N. Koura, N. Tanabe, S. Seiki, S. Takahashi, M.-L. Saboungi, L. A. Curtiss, and K. Suzuya .....	492
--	-----

Ionic Dissociation Model for (Li, K)X Binary Melts (X=F, Cl, Br or I)	
---	--

P. Hebant and G. S. Picard .....	500
----------------------------------	-----

Anomalous Behavior of Ag(I) and Tl(I) Ions in Mobilities of Molten Nitrates	
---	--

I. Okada and P. Chou .....	511
----------------------------	-----

New Development of Fiberoptic Raman Spectroscopic Probes for High Temperature Molten Salts	
---	--

S. Dai, H. M. Xiao, Y. H. Lee, and J. P. Young .....	524
--	-----

Raman Spectroscopic and Electrochemical Studies of Tungsten Species in Alkali Chloride Melts	
---	--

G. Carountzos, C. Hasiotis, and C. G. Kontoyannis .....	530
---	-----

Local Structure of K <sub>2</sub> O-SiO <sub>2</sub> Glasses and Melts	
--	--

N. Umesaki, K. Handa, N. Ohtori, and N. Kamijo .....	541
--	-----

Author Index .....	561
--------------------	-----

Subject Index .....	563
---------------------	-----

## Max Bredig Award Address

### **MOLTEN SALT ELECTROCHEMISTRY: PRESENT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES**

Niels J. Bjerrum

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Molten salt electrochemistry is by no means a new research area. Some of the initial experiments go back two hundred years in history (*e.g.*, electroreduction of alkali metals) and such an important metal as aluminum has been produced for more than hundred years by an electrolysis of a molten salt electrolyte (the Hall-Héroult process).

However, molten salt electrochemistry is a very dynamic scientific and industrial area of electrochemistry looking not into the past but into the future.

There are numerous important technical areas in molten salt electrochemistry. In some of these areas enough knowledge have been accumulated to develop qualitative improvement and often parameter optimization:

(i) *Electrochemical production of metals* is one of the most mature areas. In connection with aluminum production the main aim of developments is to obtain a higher efficiency of the process and to solve serious ecological problems.

(ii) *Electroplating of protective layers on metal surfaces*. The recent developments are mostly concerned with the electrodeposition of refractory metals from molten salt electrolytes. The most important problem in this technology is control of the composition of the molten electrolytes. Another problem with refractory metal electroplating can be illustrated with the help of the example of tantalum deposition. Two different crystal forms of tantalum can be obtained electrochemically:  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -tantalum. The deposit with the  $\alpha$ -form has better mechanical properties than that consisting of the  $\beta$ -form. Therefore, the problem of the optimization of the electrolysis parameters has to be solved with allowance for this special factor.

However, the most interesting scientific results and applications are expected in the new areas of molten salt electrochemistry:

(iii) *Metal alloy production* is an area with a considerable potential. This technique gives a possibility to obtain, for example, the alloys of aluminum with lithium (metals with high and low melting points), or in general alloys which are difficult to make by a direct combination.

(iv) *Electrodeposition of amorphous metal layers* is a technique which can be realized in molten salt electrolytes and may be the background for progressive technologies for the production of highly corrosion resistant materials.

(v) *Electrosynthesis of superhard materials*. Many such materials can be obtained electrochemically from boron-, carbon- or nitrogen-containing melts. This could be a relatively cheap technology giving a useful modification of metal surfaces. To the same area we can add the high temperature electrochemical technologies for the improvement of surface properties of superhard materials with electroplated metal layers.

(vi) *High-temperature electrocatalysis* is a process in which material is consumed or produced in an electrochemical reaction on a catalyst that is an electronic conductor. Obviously, the currently most interesting and important cases in this area are the molten carbonate fuel cells. The main problem here is to obtain non-soluble and catalytically active electrode materials.

(vii) *Electrochemical promotion of catalysts* deals with the change of activity or selectivity of molten salt catalysts using inert electrodes. It can provide an effective management concerning quality and composition of the products of the catalytic reactions.

(viii) *Hot corrosion* has the possibility of becoming a very important area of molten salt electrochemistry taking into account the perspective of combustion of new types of fuels or traditional but low quality fuels. It has been proven that the most severe hot corrosion problems are caused by a thin molten salt layer on the surface of the exposed metal and therefore have an electrochemical nature. Another example where hot corrosion is important is provided by high-temperature batteries and molten carbonate fuel cells. Electrochemical techniques can be powerful tools in searching for new ways of corrosion protection.

(ix) *High-temperature electrochemical protection from corrosion*. Cathodic and anodic protection are well known and widely used at ambient temperatures but have not to any extent been used in connection with hot (or molten salt) corrosion. For example, in connection with fire tube corrosion in boilers at power stations electrochemical protection can be one of several possible ways of prolonging the lifetime of power-station hardware.

## **Budget Summary**

**Contract No. F49620-96-1-0157; Tenth International Symposium on Molten Salts**

**AFOSR Contract Award: \$2,000**

### **Allocation of AFOSR Funds for Symposium:**

#### **Travel Supplement:**

US Invited Speakers (2):	\$640
International Invited Speakers (3):	\$900

#### **Advance Registration:**

US Invited Speakers (2):	\$460
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<b><u>Total AFOSR Expenditures</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,000</u></b>
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